



**INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:**

Reflections From Ron 1

To Serve Where You Are Called 2-4

Emergency Preparedness 5

Calendar 6

Preparing a Safe Room 7

Prayer Calendar
Clergy Birthdays 7

Know Your Tornado Terms 8

Living Water

Mission Statement: Cultivating Christian Growth

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Reflections from Ron

Hello Friends and colleagues,

July is the beginning of a new year for us. It's the beginning of a new conference year. And it has never occurred to me in quite this way before, but the beginning of each new conference year usually has freedom as its theme. The themes around the first Sunday lectionary text speak to us of our freedom in Christ. But, what does freedom in Christ mean and how do we experience it?

Each of us will choose the ways in which we will brooch that topic. What I want to do is to invite us all to revision what this freedom in Christ would mean if it were a freedom to surrender to God's will for us. What would this freedom look like if it meant that we could stop certain behaviors that limit our potential for becoming more Christ-like in our lives? What would this freedom look like if it meant that we could begin anew to cultivate Christian growth in ways that we could visibly see the image of God evolving in each other, in our local churches, in our district and annual conference?

Cultivating Christian growth increases our opportunity to be free. It can provide the strength we need to grow in Christ. It can provide the faith we need to be set free of things that prevent us from growing closer to God. It can open the doors of opportunity where Christ's Spirit can enter in and affirm God's relationship with us, giving guidance and assurance for our journey, setting us free of worry and anxiety. Cultivating Christian Growth has the potential to reshape the world in which we live so that the will of God's can and will be done on earth, setting us free from the violence and hatred that has become an ever-present reality of our world. Cultivating Christian growth in and among ourselves is one way to show the world that this freedom to love unconditionally, this freedom to display the compassionate and merciful love of Christ is the only way to be truly free.

So, friends, as we begin this new year, cultivate Christian growth within you, cultivate Christian growth among each other, and cultivate Christian growth in the places you travel showing others that in Christ I/you/we are truly free.

Agape and shalom,
Ron

To Serve Where You Have Been Called

A true story of God's love in action through Joe and Shirley Edgerton

By Marvé Ralston

Shirley smiled as she said, "you don't add any *buts* to the calling, I will go if... *but* not if. You go period and serve where you have been called."

What are you willing to do to follow Jesus? What if He asked you to travel to a third world country where you would live among His people there in poverty? Joe and Shirley Edgerton have been doing just that. The Edgertons are members of Lawrence Central UMC in the Five Rivers District. They took the two year volunteer experience to La Gonave, Haiti with a mixture of excitement and anxiety. Their goals have changed since they arrived last summer and evaluated what the people need long term. It is a knowledge that can only be gained by living among the people and studying their culture, schools, government, etc. first hand.

Shirley smiled as she said, "you don't add any *buts* to the calling, I will go if, *but* not if. You go period and serve where you have been called."

Many people could not or would not do it. The temperatures on the Island are 85-90 degrees in the winter and 90-105 degrees in the summer. There is high humidity, huge bugs, mosquitoes that carry malaria, the rainy season, the dry season, and you walk virtually everywhere. The Edgertons both lost 30 pounds last year after they first arrived. They eat the meals prepared for them from the local food available. If they are fortunate, it is twice a day, mostly consisting of beans and rice with flavoring and oil. During the week of a hurricane it was oatmeal all week. There is very little fat in their diet.

Getting used to the ongoing hunger these Islanders face has been one of the hardest things for the Edgertons to get used to. It is a hand to mouth, daily existence for the natives. If they do not catch fish that day, they don't eat and their family goes hungry. Fish are used as a trading commodity. Most adults only plan to eat every other day. As explained by Shirley, if you ask them when they last ate, they will have to think awhile because it is not hours between meals but sometimes days. Hunger becomes a non-issue except for older people and children. Babies are wrapped in warm blankets to help with the iron deficiency they are born with, resulting in poor circulation making their hands and feet cold even in warm temperatures. The Edgertons are trying to help the people stay independent of them however, and except in extreme cases food is not given.

They ask for prayer as they see their ministry moving in another direction. They want everything they do, to not perpetuate the dependency of the people but move them towards the first rung of the economic ladder. They struggle to not accept as normal, things that need to change.

The Island has developed its own culture over the years. The Edgertons have realized that it is not so much corruption in the government as mismanagement or poor management that needs to change. The people have learned that the government doesn't care for them. As a consequence, Haitians do not take care of Haitians. They are often faced with lies being commonplace. When your most basic needs are not met, it is a survival mentality that takes over. Missions need to use a tough love mentality according to Shirley. They must ask the community to help maintain the projects that are started or lose them. Perhaps change is coming, for the 1st time they will have two polling stations so that the people can vote in the next election. Maybe they will feel empowered by this and it will begin a chain reaction of hope for the future.

There are many barriers to their ministry; the language being one of the most crucial. The people there speak Creole. This is a mixture of French, Spanish, and English with many made up words that run together. This has prevented technology from taking place. Teachers are now trying to teach French and Spanish starting in the pre-schools. This is often hampered because many of the teachers do not have it down themselves. The people have been resistant to French because it is the language of the upper class. Many of the older Islanders will never speak French. French is on it's way to becoming the countries language. It will be a major help with technology and advancement. It is one more thing that stands between them moving up economically.



For two and a half months the Edgertons were joined by Amy Bowen, a KU student who taught three language classes a day, and Antoine Terrien, a France Red Cross Emergency Management trainer who helped run and organize the health clinic. They will be gone when the Edgertons return from this trip to the states. They helped with interpreting language, helped the Edgertons understand the school system and interpreted what was actually being taught. The younger people in the area were drawn to them. At the end of their time there, they both told the Edgertons that this was, "the most meaningful thing they had done in their lives so far." Both are returning to complete schooling that will enable them to work internationally.

Much is still needed in the way of school supplies and buildings. Schools need the most basic things such as electricity, water, and they share one copy machine that is used by all the schools and all other class assignments are hand written by teachers.

The Edgertons have a lofty goal of seeing that all the schools have electricity, a computer and copy machine. They are moving toward helping the teachers with training and better resources to teach. This would leave the government to pay the teachers and provide food for the children from the tuition they are given. The cost of tuition is \$150.00 per child and that is roughly 1/3 of the family income for the year.

How do the Edgertons see the people in light of evangelism? They are often asked if 70%

Continued from page 3. of the people in church are illiterate, how can they read the bible? Memorization seems to be part of the criteria for being a member in the local Methodist Churches. Those who participate in the church are often very righteous. Out of a congregation, only one fourth are considered worthy to receive communion. They must dress well to attend and have reserved their one set of good clothes just for that purpose. This leaves out the poor and lower class of people who make up the majority of the area. Shirley said that they are trying to preach by example and living with the people. She used the quote by St. Francis of Assisi "Preach the Gospel **at all times** and when necessary, use words."

So where do we fit into this picture of helping the Haitian people in La Gonave? The Edgertons have found a good source of medications to keep the health clinic supplied but need money to keep them stocked. Please pray as they try to get a Haitian physician to work at the clinic. They are trying to get Heifer Project International involved with livestock for the existing area goat farm. Water is an ongoing problem. Plastic piping needs replaced so that it is not destroyed by animals during the dry season when they are seeking water and can smell where it is at. They can use individuals with skills in management, education, water technology and farming to teach the people and help them become self sufficient. Both long term individuals (three weeks or more) and short term groups are needed. The cost per person for a construction team is around 2,500. This amount covers food, travel and project expenses. They try to make it less costly for individuals who come out to help. The Haitians are very appreciative of the volunteers as they realize the sacrifice they are making to help them. Please remember the Edgertons in your prayers for their safety. They reminded me that they are surrounded by a community that is very protective of them and they feel safe.



The Edgertons two years will be up in the fall of 2009. They plan to be back in the States around September 1st of this year for three to four weeks. They are available and would enjoy leading worship services focused on mission in our district churches at that time.

If you are able to help monetarily, here is the address to send your tax deductible mission support. Make the check payable to Central UMC/Advance #982465-6. On the memo line write "Edgertons"

Mail to: Lawrence Central UMC, 1501 Massachusetts, Lawrence, KS 66044-4273. You can read more about the Edgerton's on the church website at www.centralumclawrence.org.

The world is a book and those who do not travel read only a page. Saint Augustine

The poor give us much more than we give them. They're such strong people, living day to day with no food. And they never curse, never complain. We don't have to give them pity or sympathy. We have so much to learn from them. Mother Theresa

Emergency Preparedness

Being prepared for things out of our control is often in our power if we have a plan. You can find instructions for many emergencies at the government website www.fema.gov (click on the hazards)

After a visit to my folks who live in Manhattan, Kansas and seeing just a small part of the devastation a tornado is capable of producing. I sought out the following information for myself and to share. My mom said that they had 45 minutes to take cover but many times that is not the case. Careful planning about what you would do in a similar situation is just a good idea for we Kansans who live in OZ.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. *Jeremiah 29:1*

What to do Before a Tornado

Be alert to changing weather conditions.

- Listen to [NOAA Weather Radio](#) or to commercial radio or television newscasts for the latest information.
- Look for approaching storms
- **Look for the following danger signs:**
- Dark, often greenish sky
- Large hail
- A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotating)
- Loud roar, similar to a freight train.

If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately. [Taken with permission from the Government FEMA website at www.fema.gov](#)



Kansas State Campus even after clean-up

July 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

July 3rd and 4th

District Office Closed for Independence Day

July 6th

First Sunday for newly appointed pastors to preach

July 9th

Conference Trustees Meeting 10:00 a.m.

July 14th

Incubator Meeting at Ottawa 1st 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.



"Liberty is the great parent of science and of virtue; and a nation will be great in both always in proportion as it is free."

Thomas Jefferson quotes (American 3rd US President)

Preparing a Safe Room

Guidelines and instructions for building a safe room

Extreme windstorms in many parts of the country pose a serious threat to buildings and their occupants. Your residence may be built “to code,” but that does not mean it can withstand winds from extreme events such as tornadoes and major hurricanes. The purpose of a safe room or a wind shelter is to provide a space where you and your family can seek refuge that provides a high level of protection. You can build a safe room in one of several places in your home.

- Your basement.
- Atop a concrete slab-on-grade foundation or garage floor.
- An interior room on the first floor.

Safe rooms built below ground level provide the greatest protection, but a safe room built in a first-floor interior room also can provide the necessary protection. Below-ground safe rooms must be designed to avoid accumulating water during the heavy rains that often accompany severe windstorms.

To protect its occupants, a safe room must be built to withstand high winds and flying debris, even if the rest of the residence is severely damaged or destroyed. Consider the following when building a safe room:

- The safe room must be adequately anchored to resist overturning and uplift.
- The walls, ceiling, and door of the shelter must withstand wind pressure and resist penetration by windborne objects and falling debris.
- The connections between all parts of the safe room must be strong enough to resist the wind.
- Sections of either interior or exterior residence walls that are used as walls of the safe room, must be separated from the structure of the residence so that damage to the residence will not cause damage to the safe room.

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Clergy Birthdays

Pam Morrison	7/22/50
Bill Nelson	7/13/67
Joel Dunn	7/19/52
Marjorie Cox	7/22/51
Kathleen Ketchell-Ferris	7/25/52

District Prayer Calendar

July 6	Lawrence Indian UMC Rev. Julienne Judd
July 13	Parker-Beagle-Fontana Pastor Ed English
July 20	Clearfield-Ives’s Chapel Rev. Harriett Bechtle
July 27	Lyndon Rev. Michael McKee

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Kansas Bishop: Dr. Scott Jones

District Superintendent: Rev. Ron King

Admn. Assistant, Newsletter Editor: Marvé Ralston

Know Your Tornado Terms

Familiarize yourself with these terms to help identify a tornado hazard:

Tornado Watch

Tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information.

Tornado Warning

A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately.

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Bishop Scott Jones and Wesley KU staff at Annual Conference